

THE DAY ON WHICH BUDDHA DIED.

BY

J. F. FLEET, I.C.S. (Retd.), PH.D., C.I.E.

N30
624

[From the "JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY," January, 1909.]

60591

BQ 264

F 54

1909

~~QW30~~
~~F624~~



JOURNAL

OF THE

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

1909

I

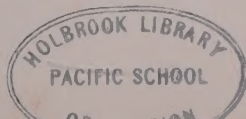
THE DAY ON WHICH BUDDHA DIED

By J. F. FLEET, I.C.S. (RETD.), PH.D., C.I.E.

(An abstract of part of this paper was read before the Indian Section of the Fifteenth International Congress of Orientalists at Copenhagen, on 19 August, 1908)

EARLY in the last century it was made known that the chronology of Ceylon, and that of Siam and Burma, derived from Ceylon, places the death of Buddha in B.C. 544 or 543. This result was apparently taken from almanacs or tables, which were found, for instance, to couple the Buddhavarsha or "year of Buddha" 2364 (completed) with some point in A.D. 1822, the year 2372 (completed) with some point in A.D. 1830, and the year 2380 (completed) with some point in A.D. 1837: or else it was derived from verbal statements to that effect. It has been supposed that the Ceylonese chronology places the death in B.C. 543, against B.C. 544 according to the Burmese and Siamese chronologies.¹ But it is

¹ See, for instance, *Prinsep's Essays*, vol. 2, Useful Tables, p. 165. This detail could probably have been settled, if we knew the time in A.D. 1822 which Crawford had in view when he said (as quoted by Turnour, *Mahāwanso*, introd., p. 49) "the year 1822 was 2364 of the era in question", and the time in A.D. 1830 which Upham had in view when he observed (as quoted *ibid.*, p. 6) that the era had lasted 2372 years in A.D. 1830, and the time in A.D. 1837 which Turnour himself had in view when he told us (*ibid.*, p. 28) that 2380 years had then



questionable whether there is really any such difference. And, whatever might be found to be the case now, the date in the Polonnaruwa inscription of Sāhasamalla shows that the Ceylonese reckoning, when it was set going, certainly placed the event, as its starting-point, in B.C. 544 : also (we may add) that the full-moon day of the month Vaiśākha was adopted as the initial day of the years of the reckoning. However, as various writers have used either year indifferently, it may be as well to bear the fact in mind, though it can hardly be of practical importance.

The matter was first fully ventilated by Turnour, in articles contributed to the *Ceylon Almanac* in 1833 and 1834 and to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1836 and 1837, and in the introduction to his text and translation of the *Mahāvamsa*, published in 1837. And it was seen by him, and by other scholars who followed him, that there must be a mistake somewhere, for the following reasons.

Buddhaghōsha and the *Mahāvamsa*¹ —(as also the passed away. However, other means of determining the point can, no doubt, be found, if it is thought worth while. But it may be added that Turnour, while placing the death in B.C. 543 and arranging all his dates B.C. on that basis, arranged his dates A.D. as if the death occurred in B.C. 544.

A modern date, apparently in A.D. 1884 or 1885, with full details for calculation, is to be found in an inscription set up at Bōdh-Gayā by a pilgrim from Ceylon : see Cunningham, *Mahābōdhi*, p. 19, note 2. But it does not help us, since the details, as published, are not correct for either of those two years : either they were incorrectly recorded, or else they have not been correctly deciphered.

¹ I use the name *Mahāvamsa* in the sense to which, I think, Geiger restricts it ; namely, of that portion of the whole chronicle which ends at a point in chapter 37 after which we have the words *Mahāvamsō niṭṭhitō*, "the *Mahāvamsa* is finished." In Turnour's text, those words come after verse 48 : but there seems to be a lacuna of two verses at verse 12, which would raise the number of that verse to 50, in accordance with the numbering indicated by Geiger : see his *Dīpavamsa und Mahāvamsa*, p. 19 ; abstract translation in *Indian Antiquary*, 1906, p. 157. The commentary stops at the same point.

Turnour has told us (*Mahāwanso*, introd., p. 2) that the remainder

Dipavaṃsa, which, however, was not then known much, if at all)—expressly state that Aśoka was anointed to the sovereignty 218 years, that is, at some time in the 219th year current, after the death of Buddha.¹ And they give details —(as also, again, does the Dipavaṃsa)— which place the initial date of Chandragupta 56 years before the anointment of Aśoka, and consequently 162 years after the death of Buddha. With B.C. 544 for the death of Buddha, the initial date of Chandragupta would fall in B.C. 382 or 381. But it was already known, from the Greek sources of information, that the initial date of Chandragupta must lie between B.C. 326 and 312. Turnour assumed B.C. 323, and so found in the Ceylonese chronology a discrepancy of “about sixty years”, which he could not exactly account for, but which he was inclined to attribute to some intentional perversion of details in the Buddhist historical statements.²

of the chronicle is usually known as the Suluvaṃsa. This is the modern form (optionally Suluvaṃsa) of the term Chūlavaṃsa (optionally Chūlavaṃsa) which occurs in chapter 99, verse 78, where Wijesinha's translation presents “the Lesser Dynasty”. It would be convenient if this name were generally adopted, so as to avoid having to speak of “the continuation of the Mahāvaṃsa”, “the later Mahāvaṃsa”, and so on.

It has been held open to question whether Mahānāma wrote the Suluvaṃsa as far as his own time; that is, to the end, or somewhere near the end, of chapter 38. But Geiger has shown reasons (*loc. cit.*) for believing that the remainder of chapter 37 must have been written after A.D. 1219. And the passage in chapter 99, verses 78–83, seems to indicate that the second instalment of the entire chronicle ran from the end of the Mahāvaṃsa to the end of the reign of a king Parakkamabāhu whose initial date has been placed by Turnour at some point after A.D. 1319, and by Wijesinha in A.D. 1295. The same passage tells us that the next instalment was written under the orders of Kittisiri-Rājasiha, who began to reign in A.D. 1747 or 1748, and that it extended to his time.

Geiger has arrived (*op. cit.*, pp. 37, 159, respectively) at the conclusion that the commentary on the Mahāvaṃsa was written between A.D. 1000 and 1250. I venture to suggest that it was a result of the restoration of Buddhism under Parakkamabāhu I, A.D. 1153–86.

¹ See the Special Note A, p. 28 below.

² *Mahāwanso*, introd., pp. 48, 50.

Subsequently, on the understanding that Buddha did die in B.C. 544 or 543, some attempts were made to adjust the chronology by correcting the details between that year and the initial date of Chandragupta. That, however, is now only a matter of academical interest.

It was eventually recognized that what the Ceylonese have really done has been, not to intentionally falsify the chronology between the death of Buddha and the initial date of Chandragupta, but to accidentally antedate both those events, by an equal number of years. From this point of view, Cunningham, working with B.C. 259 for the anointment of Aśoka, which he had just previously laid down in his *Bhilsa Topes*, arrived in 1854 at B.C. 477 for the death of Buddha;¹ and subsequently, in 1877, with a slight modification he placed the death of Buddha in B.C. 478, the initial date of Chandragupta in B.C. 316, and the anointment of Aśoka in B.C. 260.² And, from the same point of view, Max Müller, in 1859, selecting B.C. 315 for the initial date of Chandragupta, placed the death of Buddha in B.C. 477, and the anointment of Aśoka in B.C. 259; which results he regarded as giving "the best working hypothesis".³

And that point of view is, indeed, the correct one. The key to the matter is found in the point that the existing reckoning, the Buddhavarsha, is not the result of a continuous maintenance of an original reckoning from

¹ He seems to have announced this first in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. 23 (1854), p. 704: by an oversight, he used there the expression "Asoka's conversion", instead of "inauguration", i.e. anointment.

² See his *Inscriptions of Asoka*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. 1 (1877), preface, pp. 3-9.

³ See his *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (1859), p. 298 f.; or, for a more recent statement of the same view, his *Dhammapada*, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 10, second edition (1898), introd., pp. 43-7. For the expression "best working hypothesis", see *Indian Antiquary*, vol. 13 (1884), p. 149, where he added: "I still hold to it [the date B.C. 477], though not with such unreasoning pertinacity as to consider any modification of it impossible."

the death of Buddha. The belief that Buddha died in B.C. 544 or 543 has no basis in any ancient tradition. It is not supported by anything given to us by the authors of the *Dīpavaṃsa*, or by Buddhaghōṣa, or by Mahānāma, who wrote the *Mahāvaṃsa* as a commentary on the *Dīpavaṃsa*.¹ It is simply the artificial result of what was done, towards the end of the twelfth century A.D., by the persons who devised the *Buddhavarsha*, and established it as the state reckoning of Ceylon, and so set going the chronology, with a mistake of sixty-one years in excess, which has run on to the present day.

Other dates for the death of Buddha have been advanced by other writers ; such as B.C. 508, 412, 388 or 380, and 370 or 368. There is nothing in those proposals: they, again, are now matters of only academical interest. And no more interest attaches to the date put forward more recently by the author of a book on the early history of India which has lately gone into a second edition: placing the initial date of Chandragupta in B.C. 322 or 321, which does not even tally with his selection of B.C. 269 for the anointment of Aśoka, he has, with equal disregard of the historical statements, placed the death of Buddha, not in B.C. 484 or 483, but in B.C. 487,—at least three years too early to match the date assigned by him to Chandragupta.

¹ The words in the text (Turnour, chapter 38, verse 59; p. 257, last line) are:—*Datvā sahaṣṣaṃ dīpētuṃ Dīpavaṃsaṃ samādisi*. Turnour translated:—"And that he [king Dhātusēna] might also promulgate the contents of the *Dīpavaṃsa*, distributing a thousand pieces, he caused it to be read aloud thoroughly", and took the term *Dīpavaṃsa* as denoting here the *Mahāvaṃsa* itself. And Wijesinha repeated that rendering. But the meaning is:—"He bestowed a thousand (*pieces of gold*), and gave orders to write a *dīpikā* on the *Dīpavaṃsa*." And that is the real reason why the arrangement of the *Mahāvaṃsa* follows so closely the arrangement of the *Dīpavaṃsa*.

That the *pōrāṇā*, 'the ancients, the men of former times', of the second line of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, are the persons who wrote up the *Dīpavaṃsa* from time to time, has already been suggested by Oldenberg (*Dīpavaṃsa*, introd., p. 9).

I myself had occasion to consider the matter about two years ago, in a note on the date of Kanishka.¹ I found it suitable to select B.C. 320 as the initial date of Chandragupta, and so, following the historical statements in the Ceylonese books, to place the anointment of Aśoka in B.C. 264 and the death of Buddha in B.C. 482. And I put forward that arrangement as the most satisfactory and convenient one that we were likely to arrive at. In saying that, however, I overlooked certain details —(and it seems that everyone else has always overlooked them)— which, while they might confirm my result, might also give a slightly better one. We will examine one of those details now, and some matters which hinge on it.

* * * * *

Tradition says that Buddha died on the full-moon day of the month Vaiśākha (the second month in the ordinary Indian lunar year), which usually answers, for the times with which we are concerned, to part of March and part of April.² This is expressly stated in the

¹ See this Journal, 1906. 984-6.

² By the expression "ordinary Indian lunar year", I mean, of course, the Chaitrādi year, the year commencing with Chaitra śukla 1 (the first day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra), as contrasted with the Kārttikādi year commencing with Kārttika śukla 1.

It may help to elucidate matters if I give the names of the Hindū lunar months, with their ordinary equivalents for the period with which we are concerned: they are as follows:—

1. Chaitra . . . = part of February and part of March.
2. Vaiśākha . . = part of March and part of April.
3. Jyāishṭha . . = part of April and part of May.
4. Āshāḍha . . = part of May and part of June.
5. Śrāvana . . . = part of June and part of July.
6. Bhādrapada . = part of July and part of August.
7. Āsvina . . . = part of August and part of September.
8. Kārttika . . . = part of September and part of October.
9. Mārgaśīra . . = part of October and part of November.
10. Pauṣa . . . = part of November and part of December.
11. Māgha . . . = part of December and part of January.
12. Phālguna . . = part of January and part of February.

It must be borne in mind, however, that the initial day, Chaitra

Mahāvamśa, written in the first quarter of the sixth century A.D., which says (ed. Turnour, p. 11, line 2) that he died at Kuśinagara on the full-moon day of Vaiśākha. And, for a time about fifty years earlier, it is indicated by Buddhaghōsha, who says, in the introduction to his Samantapāsādikā,¹ that Buddha died at Kuśinagara on the full-moon day which has the constellation Viśākhā. In the Dīpavaṃśa, which was finished (or left unfinished) about the middle of the fourth century, I do not find any explicit statement on this point: it only says (ed. Oldenberg, 15. 70) that Buddha died at Kuśinagara. But there is a passage in it which seems to follow the belief that the day was the full-moon day of Vaiśākha: after mentioning the death (5. 1), it proceeds to say that the Sthavira Mahā-Kāśyapa convened the First Council three months later, when the fourth month and the second commencement of the *vassa*, or retreat or residence during the Rains, had arrived; and that would be the day after the full-moon of Śrāvaṇa, which is three months after the full-moon of Vaiśākha.

That, however, is the earliest period to which I can carry back the statement about the full-moon day of Vaiśākha as the day of the death of Buddha. And it may be mentioned that the indication which is given in the Dīpavaṃśa is given in the second account of the First Council: in the first account of that Council, in chapter 4, which seems to be an older and more original version, nothing is said about the time at which it was

śukla 1, is constantly receding in the solar year by one step of about eleven days or by two such steps, and is then advanced by one step of about nineteen days as the result of the intercalation of a month. The equivalents, therefore, are only approximate: and Chaitra śukla 1 might often fall in March, so that the month Chaitra would then not include any part of February, and the incidence of the other months would be pushed forward accordingly.

¹ See the Vinayapiṭaka, ed. Oldenberg, vol. 3, p. 283.

held.¹ Also, there is not wanting a reason for regarding this tradition even *primâ facie* with some suspicion, and for looking upon it as an invention made in the course of the evolution of the full romantic story of the life of Buddha. The full-moon day of Vaiśākha figures somewhat too much in connection with his career.² Not only does tradition say that he died on that day, but also it assigns the day to the following other occurrences. The *Dipavaṃsa* says (21. 28) that he was born on it: and it is in this same verse, and in connection with the birth and not the death, that we have the earliest traceable mention, under the account of king Abhaya or Bhātikābhaya of Ceylon (about A.D. 35-63), of the Vaiśākhapūjā, the great Buddhist festival at the full-moon of Vaiśākha. The *Lalitavistara* says (ed. Lefmann, p. 54 f.) that he was conceived on it. Kern tells us that it was the official date of the attainment of Buddhahood, the day on which Buddha reached the acquisition of true and perfect knowledge.³ And he further quotes Schiefner as telling us that the great defeat of the tempter Māra took place at the time of an eclipse of the moon on the full-moon day of Vaiśākha, and that Rāhula, the son of Buddha, was born at that same time.⁴

These curious coincidences are calculated to suggest

¹ So, also, the *Chullavarga* of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, while placing the First Council in the Rains (11. 1. 3-5), and plainly in the first Rains after the death of Buddha, does not say anything as to the number of months which had intervened.

² In the course of a brief discussion of my paper when it was read, Professor Jacobi reminded us of the conventional tendency of the Jain tradition to assign identical times to the leading events in the lives of the Tirthaṅkaras. Thus, it was on various days when the moon was in Uttara-Phalgunī that Mahāvīra (1) descended from heaven and entered the womb of Dēvānandā, (2) was transferred to the womb of Trisālā, (3) was born, (4) went forth into the houseless life, and (5) attained *kēvalajñāna*: but he died when the moon was in Svāti: see, e.g., *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 22, pp. 217-8, 264-5.

³ *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 101.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 16, n. 2.

a doubt. And there is another tradition, which also tends in the same direction. We all know the story about the "dotted record", first brought to notice by Max Müller from a letter received from Mr. Bunyiu Nanjio.¹ It is to the following effect. Upāli, the Chief of the Vinaya at the time of Buddha's death, made a collection of the Vinayapiṭaka, apparently in the form of a manuscript or book. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month,² on the occasion of the *pavāraṇā* or ceremony at the end of the *vassa* (next after the death of Buddha), Upāli marked the collection with a dot; and he did the same every following year while he lived. After his death, the practice was kept up from teacher to pupil. Eventually, the collection found its way to China, and came into the hands of Saṃghabhadra, who, in a year which appears to answer to A.D. 489 or 490, made the 975th dot, which has been taken as purporting to place the death of Buddha in B.C. 486 or 485. Max Müller pointed out certain objections which might be urged against this tradition: (1) that, according to the Mahāvamsa, the Piṭakas and their Atthakathā were not reduced to writing until the time of king Vaṭṭagāmaṇi of Ceylon, more than four centuries after the death of Buddha; (2) that, even if Upāli did write a copy of the Vinayapiṭaka, it is not probable that that identical copy should have been carried to China. And he expressed the opinion that the process of adding one dot at the end of every year during so long a time as 975 years would be "extremely precarious". In addition to that, we may remark that the story tells

¹ The *Academy*, 1 March, 1884, and *Indian Antiquary*, vol. 13 (1884), p. 148 ff. For some remarks by Mr. Takakusu, see this *Journal*, 1896, p. 436 f.; 1897, p. 113.

² Mr. Takakusu has explained this as the full-moon day of Āśvina, which is the seventh month in the Chaitrādi year. The *pavāraṇā*-ceremony would be performed either on that day or on the full-moon day of Kārttika, according as the *vassa* fell in the particular year. On the subject of the *vassa*, see p. 18 below.

us that in A.D. 535 it was found that the register had not been kept up after A.D. 489 or 490, and the requisite number of dots was then added, to bring the record up to date: we may reasonably ask, may not something of the same kind have happened previously also, and may not mistakes in the reckoning have been introduced thereby? But we need not discuss the chronological value of this tradition. Our point is that the dots were made each year, not on the full-moon day of Vaiśākha as we should expect if that were really the day on which Buddha died, but at the termination of the *vassa*. And this seems to connect the death of Buddha with the *vassa*, and with the end of the *vassa*, rather than with any other period of the year: it would surely be somewhat peculiar that the solemn record of the passing of another year should not be made until (counting from the full-moon day of Vaiśākha) at least five months of the new year had gone by; whereas the closing ceremony of the *vassa* would be a quite appropriate occasion for making the record, if the event marking the end of the year had occurred at any time near the day of that ceremony.

However, we are not going to dismiss the tradition about the full-moon day of Vaiśākha on the strength of any inference based on the story about the dotted record. Nor even because the day figures so freely in the full story of the career of Buddha. As regards the latter point, the case might be that other events were fitted to the full-moon day of Vaiśākha because Buddha did die on that day, just as much as because any other leading event in his life occurred on it.¹ But we find a distinct reason for

¹ Or, if we should look for some extraneous origin, it is not impossible that the belief in the full-moon day of Vaiśākha had its source in the fact (see p. 11 below) that that day was the day of the second anointment of Dēvanāmpiya-Tissa, by whom Buddhism was established as the state religion of Ceylon. For another possible origin of the belief, see a suggestion mentioned on p. 16 below.

rejecting it, in the fact that it is incompatible with certain historical statements of a definite nature.

*

*

*

*

*

A famous contemporary of Aśoka was Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa, king of Ceylon. Amongst other things about him the Dipavaṃsa—for our full and critical knowledge of which we are so greatly indebted to Professor Oldenberg's text and translation—tells us (11. 25) that he and Aśoka were *adittḥa-sahāyā*, "allies or firm friends though they had never seen each other," and *daḥha-bhattikā*, "united by strong attachment." It further tells us (17. 78) that Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa was anointed to the sovereignty 236 years after the death of Buddha, that is, at some time in the 237th year current: also, that he was twice anointed; ¹ for the first time (11. 14), on a certain day, which we gather from the Mahāvaṃsa was Mārgaśīra śukla 1, the first day of the bright fortnight of Mārgaśīra (the ninth lunar month),² seventeen years and not quite six months after the anointment of Aśoka; and again (11. 39) on the full-moon day of the following Vaiśākha. And I may remark, in passing, that this statement about the first anointment of Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa places the anointment of Aśoka shortly after the first day of the bright fortnight of Jyaishṭha (the third lunar month); the exact day being in all probability śukla 5 (see p. 31 below). Again, the Dipavaṃsa tells us (15. 71) that Mahēndra arrived in Ceylon 236 years after the death of Buddha, that is, at some time in the 237th year current, and (11. 40; 12. 42-4; 17. 88) on the full-moon day of Jyaishṭha, one month after the second anointment of Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa, and eighteen years after the anointment of Aśoka.

¹ See the Special Note C, p. 32 below.

² The Dipavaṃsa says (11. 14) that it was in the season Hēmanṭa, in the second month, when the moon was in the Ashāḍhā *nakshatra*. The Mahāvaṃsa explains this by saying (Turnour, p. 70, last line) that it was:—Maggasira-māsassa ādi-chand-odaye dinē, "on the day of the month Mārgaśīra which has the initial rising of the moon."

Now, if the years of the era of the death of Buddha are taken as commencing originally, as has been the case from the twelfth century A.D., with the full-moon day of Vaiśākha as the anniversary of his death, it is soon seen that the last-mentioned statement is inconsistent with the statement that Dēvānāmpīya-Tissa was first anointed on the first day of the bright fortnight of Mārgaśīra in the year 236 completed:¹ between that day and the full-moon day of the following Jyaishṭha there intervened a full-moon day of Vaiśākha; and Mahēndra should have arrived in Ceylon in the year 237 completed, not 236, and not eighteen, but nineteen years after the anointment of Aśōka.

Again, the Dipavaṃsa tells us (as I have already mentioned) that Aśōka was anointed 218 years after the death of Buddha; that is, at some time in the 219th year current. Then, on the same basis, with the full-moon day of Vaiśākha as the commencement of the year, the seventeenth anniversary of the anointment of Aśōka came about three weeks after the end of the year 235; and the first anointment of Dēvānāmpīya-Tissa, when the year 236 had elapsed, was, not six months, but eighteen months after that.²

¹ This expression may be thought somewhat self-contradictory. But it is frequently used in dealing with Indian dates; and it seems to convey best what is wanted here. It is, in fact, in accordance with the Indian custom as shown in inscriptions which present such terms as *vartamāna*, 'being current', in connection with figures for expired years.

² Thus: let us assume B.C. 483 as the year in which Buddha died, on the full-moon day of Vaiśākha — (any other year would of course suit equally well for the purposes of this illustration; but we use the above-mentioned year because we shall take it again, definitely, farther on): then we have the following position:—

Years of the era of the death of Buddha on Vaiśākha śukla 15.	Years of the anointment of Aśōka on Jyaishṭha śukla 5.
1 began Vaiśākha śu. 15, B.C. 483	
1 ended Vaiśākha śu. 14, B.C. 482	
218 ended Vaiśākha śu. 14, B.C. 265	

Aśōka was anointed king of Northern India early in the bright

It would be easy, treating matters summarily, to find in this position another reason for disputing the value, or at any rate the accuracy, of the *Dīpavaṃsa*, and for proceeding to a wholesale condemnation of it and our other authorities. The case is different, however, if we look into it.

* * * * *

These statements in the *Dīpavaṃsa* about the anointment of Aśoka, the anointment of *Dēvaṇāmpiya-Tissa*, and the arrival of *Mahēndra* in Ceylon, are at once reconcilable on the hypothesis that the death of Buddha took place, and the years of the era originally began, not on the full-moon day of *Vaiśākha*, but on some day between the full-moon day of *Jyāishṭha* and the first day of the bright fortnight of *Mārgaśīra*. And we have not to search far to find a tradition which gives us a suitable day.

fortnight of *Jyāishṭha*, in all probability on the day śukla 5,
B.C. 265,— 218 years after the death of Buddha.

	←	1 began <i>Jyāishṭha</i> śu. 5, B.C. 265
219 ended <i>Vaiśākha</i> śu. 14, B.C. 264	←	1 ended <i>Jyāishṭha</i> śu. 4, B.C. 264
235 ended <i>Vaiśākha</i> śu. 14, B.C. 248	←	17 ended <i>Jyāishṭha</i> śu. 4, B.C. 248
236 ended <i>Vaiśākha</i> śu. 14, B.C. 247	←	18 ended <i>Jyāishṭha</i> śu. 4, B.C. 247

Dēvaṇāmpiya-Tissa was anointed king of Ceylon for the first time on *Mārgaśīra* śukla 1, B.C. 247,— 236 years after the death of Buddha, but $18\frac{1}{2}$ (instead of $17\frac{1}{2}$) years after the anointment of Aśoka.

237 ended *Vaiśākha* śu. 14, B.C. 246 |

Dēvaṇāmpiya-Tissa was anointed for the second time on the full-moon day *Vaiśākha* śukla 15, B.C. 246,— 237 years after the death of Buddha.

← | 19 ended *Jyāishṭha* śu. 4, B.C. 246

Mahēndra arrived in Ceylon on the full-moon day *Jyāishṭha* śukla 15, B.C. 246,— 237 (instead of 236) years after the death of Buddha, and 19 (instead of 18) years after the anointment of Aśoka.

Hiuen-tsiang tells us¹ that the general tradition was that Buddha died on the fifteenth day of the second half of Vaiśākha; that is, as we know from his account of the Indian calendar,² on the full-moon day of Vaiśākha. But he adds that, according to the Sarvāstivādins, Buddha died on the eighth day of the second half of Kārttika; that is, on Kārttika śukla 8, the eighth day of the bright fortnight of Kārttika (the eighth lunar month).

This statement is, of course, in respect of date of record, later than even the statement in the Mahāvamsa. But the foundation for it may well go back to a very respectable antiquity. We know at any rate, from the inscriptions on the Mathurā lion-capital,³ that the Sarvāstivādins were flourishing at that city in the first quarter of the first century A.D. Another inscription of the same period⁴ tends to locate a body of them at Kāman, about thirty-five miles west-north-west from Mathurā. Inscriptions of the Kanishka series⁵ place them, during the preceding century, at Sēt-Mahēt or Sahēt-Mahēt, which is the ancient Śrāvastī,⁶ and at Sārnāth (Benares). And the Dipavaṃsa tells us (5. 47, 53) that they were one of the so-called schismatic or heretical sects which came into existence in the second century after the death of Buddha.

It may easily be the case that the very reason for which the Sarvāstivādins were regarded as schismatics or heretics, was, that they had a knowledge, regarding the day of the death of Buddha, which, while it happened to be in accordance with the actual fact, differed from

¹ See Julien, *Mémoires*, vol. 1, pp. 334-5; Beal, *Si-yu-ki*, vol. 2, p. 33; Watters, *On Yuan Chwang*, vol. 2, p. 28: see also, Julien, *Vie*, p. 131; Beal, *Life*, p. 98.

² See, e.g., Beal, *Si-yu-ki*, vol. 1, p. 71.

³ This Journal, 1894. 533; *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 9, p. 141.

⁴ *Epi. Ind.*, vol. 1, p. 212.

⁵ *Epi. Ind.*, vol. 8, p. 181; Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India for 1904-5, p. 68.

⁶ See Dr. Vogel's note in this Journal, 1908. 971.

the popular view. At any rate, if we take the day thus given us, Kārttika śukla 8, as the day on which Buddha died, and as the day on which the years of the era of his death originally began, any semblance of error in the historical statements about Aśoka, Dēvānāmpiya-Tissa, and Mahēndra, at once disappears.¹ The seventeenth year after the anointment of Aśoka was completed in the seventh month after the end of the year 235 after the death of Buddha. Dēvānāmpiya-Tissa was first anointed within a month after the end of the year 236 after the death of Buddha, and not quite six months after the seventeenth anniversary of the anointment of Aśoka: and his second anointment was celebrated while the year 236 completed was still running.² And Mahēndra did arrive in Ceylon in the same year 236 completed, and a short time (ten days) after the eighteenth anniversary of the anointment of Aśoka.

* * * * *

We come now to the point that the position, that the real day of the death of Buddha was Kārttika śukla 8, is at least not opposed to what we can gather from the Mahāparinibbāna-Sutta, the ancient Pāli work which gives the story of the last journey of Buddha and his death, and seems to be our earliest authority, and a reliable one, for the details.

This work does not name the day, or the month, or (as far as I can find) even the season, of the death of Buddha. It only tells us³ that he breathed his last at Kuśinagara, in the last watch of the night, on a couch, with its head laid to the north, between a twin pair of Śāla trees which were masses of fruiting flowers from blossoms out of season. And we are left to speculate whether the Śāla trees, *Vatica robusta* or *Shorea robusta*, which would usually flower in March or April, had on that occasion simply flowered

¹ See the table at p. 27 below.

² See note 1 on p. 12 above.

³ See this Journal, 1906. 657.

rather early ; or whether, by chance, they had put forth some flowers at an altogether wrong time of the year, just as (we know) in England various trees and bushes sometimes blossom at Christmas, when the weather is mild, long before the proper time : and, of course, a very small amount of bloom would soon be magnified by tradition into the statement that the trees were masses of flowers. That does not teach us much : and I have elsewhere suggested¹ that the tradition that Buddha died on the full-moon day of Vaiśākha might be based on some poetical description of the event, containing a play on the word *viśākha*, in the two senses of ‘branched, forked’, and of ‘branchless, without branches’, in the way of all the branches being hidden by masses of flowers. More to the point are the following facts.

The Sutta tells us² that Buddha spent his last *vassa*, or retreat or residence during the Rains, at Bēluvagāmaka, a village in the immediate neighbourhood of Vaiśālī ; the friars who were travelling with him settling for the same purpose round about Vaiśālī, just as they could find accommodation. And it mentions three occurrences in connection with that *vassa*.

The first thing that happened, apparently quite soon after the commencement of the *vassa*, was, that Buddha had a severe illness, with “great pains even unto death,” from which he recovered only by the power of his will. He forced himself to recover, because he thought that it would not be right to pass away without addressing his attendants, and obtaining the consent of the community of friars.

The second occurrence was this. Shortly after his recovery from that attack, Buddha sat one day outside the *vihāra* or monastery at which he was staying, and

¹ This Journal, 1906. 659, note.

² See the text, ed. Childers, in this Journal, 1875. 72 ff. ; translation by Davids in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 11, p. 34 ff.

had a conversation with Ānanda. In the course of it, he had occasion to remark that he was eighty years old, and had reached such an age that the end of his journey was near at hand ; adding that, though his course might be prolonged, still, just as in the case of a very old wagon, that could only be done by means of great care and attention. We can hardly doubt, in view of this, that he recognized that the illness from which he had just recovered was a sign that he could not live much longer.

The third occurrence was as follows. On another occasion, Buddha spent the day with Ānanda at the Chāpālachaitya at Vaiśālī, and mentioned, in the course of conversation, that such were the powers that he possessed that he might, if so disposed, live on till the end of the æon. Ānanda, however, did not understand the hint, and failed to entreat Buddha to live on. Buddha then dismissed Ānanda for a while. And, when he was left alone, Māra, the Evil One, approached him, and tempted him there again ; reminding him of something that had previously passed between them, and suggesting that, his mission being accomplished by the successful establishment of his religion, he should die without further delay. “ Be not so impatient, thou Evil One ! ” said Buddha ; “ the death of the Tathāgata shall be after no long time : at the end of three months from now, the Tathāgata will die.” And then and there (we are told) Buddha deliberately renounced the long remnant of life that he might have enjoyed.

Now, this prediction — (I treat it as such, because that is the form in which the detail is given to us ; but it is really, of course, a statement of fact artistically presented as a prophecy) — this prediction was uttered at some time between the full-moon days of Āshāḍha and Kārttika, which are the extreme limits of the Buddhist *vassa*. And it is irreconcilable with the death of Buddha on the full-moon day of Vaiśākha ; because not

three months, but six, intervene between the full-moon day of Kārttika and that of Vaiśākha. It is, however, adaptable at once to the death of Buddha on Kārttika śukla 8. But, to make this clear, I must be excused for entering into a short digression on the subject of the *vassa* and the rainy season.

The *vassa* was the retreat or residence in a fixed abode during the Rains, necessitated by climatic conditions which made it incumbent on the Buddhist mendicants, as on others also, to abstain for a while from their wandering life. The *vassa*, however, was not coterminous with the season Varshā, the Rains. According to the division of the year into three seasons, which is followed mostly if not quite altogether in the Buddhist books, and the use of which is vouched for by inscriptions of the first century B.C., the season Varshā lasted for four months. And, according to one adaptation of the seasons to the lunar months, it lasted from the beginning of Āshāḍha to the end of Āśvina; while according to another such adaptation it lasted from the beginning of Śrāvaṇa to the end of Kārttika. The *vassa*, however, was a period of only three months, which might, according to the Buddhist books,¹ commence either on the day after the Āshāḍhī full-moon, the full-moon of Āshāḍha, or on the day after the full-moon of Śrāvaṇa: the first period, ending with the full-moon day of Āśvina, was termed "the earlier *vassa*"; the other period, ending with the full-moon of Kārttika, was termed "the later *vassa*".

Now, the period of the *vassa* may of course have been determined, and no doubt was determined, largely by the full-moons of Āshāḍha and Śrāvaṇa; that is, by the lunar calendar. But the period of the Rains is not determinable by any such means: it is a natural season, regulated by the solar year; and, according to the Indian

¹ See, e.g., the Vinaya-piṭaka, Maṇḍavagga, 3. 2. 2; 3. 3. 2.

astronomical books and modern almanacs, it commences at the summer solstice ; and, of course, at the true summer solstice, now falling on the 21st or 22nd June,—not (as the modern almanacs would have it) at the Indian nominal solstice, as marked by the entrance of the sun into the sidereal instead of the tropical sign Cancer, which now occurs about three weeks after the true solstice, and in the time of Buddha was occurring about a fortnight before it. And that definition of the season Varshā (we may observe) seems to have originated in Northern India. In Western India, the Rains, if they are punctual, are in full swing by the 6th or 7th June. In Northern India they are appreciably later. And the Gazetteer of the North-West Provinces tells us (vol. 6, ed. 1881, p. 314) that in Gōrakhpūr, which district seems very representative of the general area of the wanderings of Buddha, they begin about the middle or end of June, and last till the middle or end of September.

We find in these conditions, and not in any caprice,—in a common-sense provision for being under shelter during the worst part of the rainy season,—the origin of the two alternative periods for the Buddhist *vassa*. And, in connection with the formulation of the rule, we must carry our thoughts back to a time when the Indian nominal seasons were much more closely in agreement with the natural seasons than is now the case. Also, not only has the commencement of the Indian solar year always been steadily travelling forwards in the Julian year, carrying the commencement of the lunar year with it, but also the incidence of the lunar months is always shifting backwards and forwards in the solar year. There was a time when the full-moon of Āshāḍha had the same relative position with regard to the true solstice that it has with regard to the Indian nominal solstice, and was consequently falling sometimes on the day of the true solstice, sometimes nearly a fortnight before or after it.

There was, of course, even a time when the full-moon of Śrāvaṇa had that position. And the period in which Buddha lived was on the border-line between those two times. In his day the commencement of the *vassa*, as regulated by the full-moons, would be determined naturally by the full-moon of Āshāḍha or of Śrāvaṇa, according as the former or the latter was the nearer to the solstice and to the actual commencement of the Rains.

If we place the death of Buddha in B.C. 483, to which year other considerations lead us, I find, from bases given to me by Professor Jacobi, that the full-moon of Āshāḍha occurred on 24 June,¹ only five days before the true summer solstice, which (I am indebted to Professor Jacobi himself for this detail) was on 29 June. We may reasonably suppose that the Rains came punctually that year; in which case, as the approach of them can always be recognized a few days beforehand, the *vassa* would very suitably begin on 25 June, the day after the Āshāḍhī full-moon, and it would end with the full-moon day of Āśvina. On the understanding that the prediction about the time to Buddha's death may be referred to the end of the first three weeks of the *vassa*, on or closely about Śrāvaṇa śukla 8, —(and the understanding is a reasonable one, not opposed by anything in the Sutta),—

¹ For being able to present this result and some other equivalents of Indian dates mentioned in this paper, I am greatly indebted to Professor Jacobi. Neither do his Tables, published in the *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. 1, p. 403 ff., and vol. 2, p. 487 ff., nor do those given by Messrs. Sewell and Dikshit in their *Indian Calendar*, reach back to the times with which we are concerned. But, in response to a request made by me, he very kindly arranged the bases which have enabled me to make the necessary calculations according to the lines of the First Ārya-Siddhānta, the Āryabhaṭīya of Āryabhaṭa (born A.D. 476), who was one of the oldest, if not actually the oldest, of the scientific Hindū astronomers. Without a larger knowledge of the exact manner in which the Hindūs regulated their earliest calendar, we cannot, perhaps, arrive at once, by these means, at a final settlement of all the chronological items: but we may pave the way towards it; and the results exhibited on this occasion are correct for all present purposes.

it was uttered three months before Kārttika śukla 8. And there was a clear interval of twenty days, from the full-moon day of Āśvina to Kārttika śukla 8, for Buddha to do all that he did between the end of the *vassa* and his death. During that interval, not much occurred.

The Mahāparinibbāna-Sutta distinctly conveys the impression that Buddha felt, at Bēluvagāma, that the end of his life was near. And it is not unnatural to think that his object was to make his way on to Kapilavastu, and die there, in his native place. To that end, he would leave Bēluvagāma at the earliest possible moment; even before the roads were really open again for any general traffic: especially since certain details in the Jātaka indicate that his customary progress was by easy daily marches, each of only one Māgadha *yōjana* = 4·54 miles. As a matter of fact, he made only five marches and five halts,—at Bhaṇḍagāma, Hatthigāma, Ambagāma, Jambugāma, and Bhōganagara,—before he reached Pāvā, where, incautiously dining at the house of Chunda the blacksmith's son on the succulent parts, the titbits, of a young wild boar, which even he, at his great age, could not digest, he contracted the attack of dysentery, from the effects of which he died, almost directly afterwards, at the next place, Kuśinagara. Nothing is said to lead us to think that he made any long stay at any of those places. And all that could easily be accomplished within the twenty days after the end of the *vassa*, between the full-moon day of Āśvina and Kārttika śukla 8.

* i * * *

Our position, then, is as follows. The full-moon day of Vaiśākha, as one of the days given by tradition for the death of Buddha, does not answer the requirements of the case in respect of statements in the Dīpavaṁsa about certain historical events in the careers of Aśoka, Dēvanāmpiya-Tissa, and Mahēndra. The day Kārttika śukla 8,

given for that occurrence by the tradition of a sufficiently ancient Buddhist sect, that of the Sarvāstivādins, does answer those requirements. It is at least not opposed to what we can gather from the Mahāparinibbāna-Sutta and from the story about the "dotted record". And there is nothing about it tending to lead us to regard it, like the full-moon day of Vaiśākha, as an invented or conventional day: for there is (as far as my knowledge goes) no mention of it in connection with any other event in Buddha's career, or with any other Buddhist observances; and from any other point of view it is only marked as being, like every other eighth day of a bright fortnight, a day on which worship of the goddess Durgā should be performed.

In these circumstances, we need not hesitate to take Kārttika śukla 8 as really the day on which Buddha died. And I conclude this note with a table which shows how, with this basis, the statements in the Dipavaṃsa about Aśoka, Dēvānāpiya-Tissa, and Mahēndra, are correct, and which presents also some other leading chronological details. The table is arranged on the bases that the year in which Buddha died was B.C. 483, and that the day of his death was Kārttika śukla 8, = 13 October. Towards determining the year, the important data are (1) the initial date of Chandragupta, the limits of which are fixed by the Greek writers, and (2) the date of the anointment of Dēvānāpiya-Tissa, the limits of which are regulated by the limits of (1). For the latter occurrence, the mention of the Ashāḍhā *nakshatra* (see p. 11 above, note 2) indicates B.C. 247 or 242.¹ The choice thus lies between B.C. 247 + 236 = 483, and B.C. 242 + 236 = 478. And the earlier year is preferentially supported by a general consideration of the circumstances which paved the way to the acquisition of the sovereignty by Chandragupta. The

¹ We must exhibit the examination of this detail on some other occasion.

anointment of Aśoka then comes to B.C. 264. And the intermediate events have to be arranged according to these two termini. The following are some other introductory remarks.

We deduce, in the manner indicated on p. 3 above, that Chandragupta became king of Northern India 162 years after the death of Buddha; that is, at some time in the 163rd year current (B.C. 321–20). The date of the seizure of the sovereignty by Aśoka, on or closely about 1 May, B.C. 268 (see p. 26 below), and the length of the reigns (52 years) of Chandragupta and his successor, require us to place the initial date of Chandragupta not later than some time quite early in B.C. 320. And it may probably be best referred to any day between Kārttika śukla 8, = 23 September,¹ B.C. 321, and 1 January, B.C. 320.

Chandragupta reigned for 24 years.² We are told this by the *Dipavaṃsa*, 5. 73, 100, and by *Buddhaghōsha* (see this *Journal*, 1906. 985, note). The extant text of the *Mahāvamsa*, indeed, assigns 34 years to him (ed. Turnour, p. 21, l. 11): but there can be no doubt that that is to be attributed to some corruption of the original reading. The circumstances in which his reign came to an end are not yet known.³

¹ It must always be borne in mind that the years are lunar years of the luni-solar system, sometimes about eleven days shorter, sometimes about nineteen days longer, than a solar year.

² It is always a moot-point whether such a statement means something in excess of 24 years but not enough so to be counted as 25, or something less than 24 years but not sufficiently so to be counted as only 23. I take it that the 24, 28, and 37 years assigned to Chandragupta, Bindusāra, and Aśoka, mean in each case something slightly in excess of the given number.

On the other hand, any such statement as 218 years after the death of Buddha means certainly some time in the 219th year current, after the completion of 218 years.

³ There is a story in Mysore (see, e.g., *Inscriptions at Sravāṇa-Belgoḷa*, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2, introd., p. 3 ff.), which has been accepted quite seriously, that Chandragupta abdicated, became a Jain monk, went to Southern India with the Śruta-Kēvalin Bhadrabāhu, and died at

Chandragupta having reigned for 24 years, his successor came to the throne $162 + 24 = 186$ years after the death of Buddha; that is, at some time in the 187th year current (B.C. 297-96). Working back in the same way from the date of the seizure of the sovereignty by Aśoka, we must place the accession of the successor of Chandragupta some time early in B.C. 296. And it is probably best placed about 1 February in that year.

The Greek writers mention, as a son of Chandragupta and as reigning after him, a ruler whom they knew as Amitrokhadēs.¹ This appellation has been generally held to denote a Sanskrit Amitraghāta, 'slayer of enemies'. But that word has not yet been established as a personal name by any Indian or Ceylonese books or inscriptions: and I prefer to take the Greek transliteration as meaning Amitrakhāda, 'devourer of enemies', which does occur, as an appellation of Indra. The *Dīpavaṃsa* (5. 101; 6. 15) mentions the father of Aśoka as Bindusāra, and, styling Aśoka a *naptri* or 'grandson' of Chandragupta, may be taken as implying that Bindusāra was a son of Chandragupta.² Buddhaghōsha, without defining the relationship

Śravaṇa-Belgola. The story, however, is only presented in a compendium of Jain history, called *Rājavalikathe*, which was composed in the last century. And, when we examine it, we find (see *Ind. Ant.*, 21, 1892. 156 ff.) that it really indicates, not Chandragupta the grandfather of Aśoka, but an otherwise unknown Chandragupta, son of Aśoka's alleged son Kunāla; that he abdicated in favour of an otherwise unknown son named Sinihasēna; and that the Bhadrabāhu who figures in it is, not the Śruta-Kēvalin of that name, but quite a different person, the pontiff Bhadrabāhu II. The story is probably of quite modern invention. If there is anything early about it, it rests upon certain inscriptions which do assign a disciple named Chandragupta to Bhadrabāhu II, and upon a reminiscence of the abdication of Aśoka, which must have become known in Mysore through the publication of the Last Edict there. From any point of view, it has not the slightest historical value as affecting Chandragupta the grandfather of Aśoka.

¹ There are the variants Amitrokhātēs and Allitrokhādēs. It is easy to see, from coins of the Kanishka series, how the λλ arose from a loosely formed cursive M.

² The word *naptri* is not as explicit as *pantra*, 'son's son,' and may denote either a son's son or a daughter's son.

between Chandragupta and Bindusāra, mentions Bindusāra as the successor of Chandragupta and Aśōka as a son of Bindusāra.¹ And the Mahāvamsa explicitly says (p. 21, lines 11, 12) that the successor of Chandragupta was Bindusāra, and that he was both a son of Chandragupta and the father of Aśōka. In these circumstances, there seems no objection to follow the usual belief that the successor of Chandragupta was Bindusāra, —otherwise known as Amitrakhāda,² — whose initial date we place about 1 February, B.C. 296.

Buddhaghōsha and the Mahāvamsa both say (loc. cit., in each case) that Bindusāra reigned for 28 years. And, though the Dipavamsa does not actually say that Bindusāra reigned, still the same duration for a reign between the reigns of Chandragupta and Aśōka is deducible from the statements (11. 5, 12, 13) by which it fixes the years of the anointment and death of king Muṭasiva of Ceylon: its silence on the detail of the successor of Chandragupta is attributable to the points that no great Elder of the Church was found to have died during the interval between Chandragupta and Aśōka, and that the interval was entirely bridged over by the reign of Muṭasiva.

The termination of the reign of Bindusāra, which ended apparently with his death, was, therefore, $186 + 28 = 214$ years after the death of Buddha; that is, at some time in the 215th year current (B.C. 269–68). And it may be placed closely about 1 May, B.C. 268.

On the death of Bindusāra, his son Aśōka seized the sovereignty. On the point that this ruler did not succeed to the throne peaceably, in the natural order of things, but

¹ In the introduction to his *Samantapāsādikā*: see the *Vinayapīṭaka*, ed. Oldenberg, vol. 3, pp. 321, 299.

² With this second appellation, taking officially (as is evident from the Greek statements) the place of the real personal name, compare *Dēvānāmpriya* and *Priyadarśin* in the case of Aśōka: see this *Journal*, 1908. 482–5.

seized it against opposition even if he did not actually usurp it, see this Journal, 1908. 812. He ruled without anointment for four years, during which time he was evidently occupied in making his position secure: and the Ceylonese tradition tells us that —(in conformity, perhaps, with a not uncommon and often necessary practice in ancient times)—during that period he slew all his brothers, or all save one. He was then anointed to the sovereignty, 218 years after the death of Buddha;¹ that is, at some time in the 219th year current (B.C. 265–64). His anointment is placed, by the statements about the first anointment of Dēvanāṃpiya-Tissa of Ceylon (see p. 11 above), on an early day in the bright fortnight of the month Jyaishṭha, B.C. 264: and the pointed references to the *nakshatra* or constellation Tishya, i.e. Pushya, in some of his edicts, in all probability marks the day of his anointment as 25 April, = śukla 5, the fifth day of the bright fortnight, in that year.² As he had then completed four years without being anointed, his seizure of the sovereignty is probably to be placed closely about Jyaishṭha śukla 1, = 5 May, for which let us say 1 May, B.C. 268.

The Dipavaṃsa tells us (5. 101) that Aśoka reigned for 37 years (from the date of his anointment): so also does the Mahāvaṃsa (p. 122, l. 8). That carries us on to the year 255, completed, after the death of Buddha; that is, to the 256th year current (B.C. 228–27), and to a date not long after Jyaishṭha śukla 4, = 5 May, in B.C. 227.

For the closing events of his career, —beginning with his becoming a Buddhist disciple or lay-worshipper, and ending with the issue of the Last Edict, which, being dated 256 years after the death of Buddha, that is, at some time in the 257th year current (B.C. 227–26), confirms in so interesting a manner the statements of the Ceylonese authorities about the time, after the death of Buddha,

¹ See the Special Note A, p. 28 below.

² See the Special Note B, p. 31 below.

when he began to reign, and about the length of his reign,— see this Journal, 1908. 496 f., 815, 822. The Ceylonese were not much, if at all, concerned with Aśoka after the nineteenth year after his anointment, when they had obtained Saṅghamitrā and the branch of the *bōdhi*-tree. The Dipavaṁsa accordingly tells us nothing more about him, except that he reigned for 37 years. The statements in the Mahāvaṁsa (p. 122), which seem to be of a somewhat legendary nature, were derived from some other source: very possibly Buddhaghōsha took them with him from India.

Chronological Table.

Years of the era of the death of Buddha on Kārttika śukla 8.	Years of the anointment of Aśoka on Jyaishṭha śukla 5.
1 began Kārttika śu. 8, B.C. 483	
1 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 482	
162 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 321	
Chandragupta became king of Northern India 162 years after the death of Buddha, and probably between Kārttika śukla 8, = 23 September, B.C. 321, and 1 January, B.C. 320.	
163 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 320	
186 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 297	
Bindusāra succeeded Chandragupta 186 years after the death of Buddha, and probably about 1 February, B.C. 296.	
187 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 296	
214 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 269	
Bindusāra died, and Aśoka seized the sovereignty, 214 years after the death of Buddha, and closely about 1 May, B.C. 268.	
215 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 268	
218 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 265	
Aśoka was anointed king 218 years after the death of Buddha, and early in the bright fortnight of Jyaishṭha, in all probability on the day śukla 5, = 25 April, B.C. 264.	
	← 1 began Jyaishṭha śu. 5, B.C. 264
219 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 264	← 1 ended Jyaishṭha śu. 4, B.C. 263
235 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 248	← 17 ended Jyaishṭha śu. 4, B.C. 247
236 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 247	
Dēvānampiya-Tissa was anointed king of Ceylon for the first time, 236 years after the death of Buddha and 17½ years after the anointment of Aśoka, on Mārgaśīra śukla 1, = 6 November, B.C. 247.	

Dēvānāmpīya-Tissa was anointed for the second time, 236 years after the death of Buddha, on the full-moon day Vaiśākha śukla 15, = 16 April, B.C. 246.

← 18 ended Jyaishṭha śu. 4, B.C. 246

Mahēndra arrived in Ceylon, 236 years after the death of Buddha and 18 years after the anointment of Aśōka, on the full-moon day Jyaishṭha śukla 15, = 16 May, B.C. 246.

237 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 246

← 19 ended Jyaishṭha śu. 4, B.C. 245

247 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 236

← 29 ended Jyaishṭha śu. 4, B.C. 235

248 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 235

Aśōka was converted to Buddhism, and became a disciple or lay-worshipper, about half-way through the 30th year after his anointment, in B.C. 235.

← 30 ended Jyaishṭha śu. 4, B.C. 234

250 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 233

← 32 ended Jyaishṭha śu. 4, B.C. 232

Aśōka formally joined the Buddhist Saṃgha soon after the commencement of the 33rd year, in B.C. 232.

251 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 232

← 33 ended Jyaishṭha śu. 4, B.C. 231

255 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 228

← 37 ended Jyaishṭha śu. 4, B.C. 227

Aśōka, having reigned 37 years from the time of his anointment, abdicated, took the vows of a monk, and passed into religious retirement at Suvarṇagiri, Sōngir, early in the 38th year, in B.C. 227.

256 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 227

← 38 ended Jyaishṭha śu. 4, B.C. 226

Aśōka issued his Last Edict early in the 39th year, about one year after his abdication and passing into religious retirement, and 256 years after the death of Buddha, in B.C. 226.

257 ended Kārttika śu. 7, B.C. 226

SPECIAL NOTES.

A (see pp. 3, 26, above).—The anointment of Aśōka
218 years after the death of Buddha.

That Aśōka was anointed to the sovereignty 218 years after the death of Buddha, that is, at some time in the 219th year current, is the clear and unanimous statement of the three authorities: see the *Dīpavaṃsa*, 6. 1; *Buddha-gḥōsha*, in the introduction to his *Samantapāsādikā* as

given in the Vinayapiṭaka, ed. Oldenberg, vol. 3, p. 299 ; the Mahāvamsa, ed. Turnour, pp. 21-2. I have quoted and translated the passages from Buddhaghōṣa and the Mahāvamsa, in this Journal, 1906. 985, note. But I will repeat the passage from the Mahāvamsa : with three small emendations which do not affect the sense,¹ it runs as follows :—

Vēmātikē bhātārē sō hantvā ēkūnakam sataṃ |
sakalē Jambudīpasmiṃ ēkarajjam apāpuṇi ||
Jina-nibbānatō pachchhā purē tass-ābhisēkatō |
sātthārasaṃ vassa-sata-dvayaṃ ēvaṃ vijāṇiyaṃ ||
Patvā chatuhi vassēhi ēkarajjam mahāyasō |
purē Pāṭaliputtasmiṃ attānaṃ abhisēchayi ||

Translation :—“ Having slain (*his*) brothers, born of various mothers, to the number of a hundred less by one,² he attained sole sovereignty in the whole of Jambudīpa. After the death of the Conqueror (Buddha), (*and*) before the anointment of him (Aśōka), (*there were*) 218 years : thus is it to be understood. Having attained the sole sovereignty in four years, he, possessed of great fame, caused himself to be anointed at the town Pāṭaliputta.”

It is a matter for regret that Professor Norman, in writing his article devoted to a defence of the Ceylonese chronicles, failed to recognize that the authorities are in agreement on this point. He has said (this Journal, 1908.

¹ Professor Norman has indicated (this Journal, 1908. 14) that the correct reading is *sātthārasaṃ*, instead of the *attthārasaṃ* given by Turnour. I amend Turnour's *vassa-sataṃ dvayaṃ* into *vassa-sata-dvayaṃ*, and his *ēkarajja-mahāyasō* into *ēkarajjam mahāyasō*, in accordance with the Colombo text edited by Sumangala and Batuwantudawa.

² I will comment, on some other occasion, on this statement, based on the Dipavamsa, 6. 22, which, admissible enough from a Purāṇic point of view, reads somewhat strangely in what purports to be a sober chronicle of facts : also on the verse in the Dipavamsa, 6. 24, which has been supposed to say that Aśōka was anointed at 20 years of age, or when Mahēndra was 20 years old. Meanwhile, I may say that, originally, verse 22 said that Aśōka slew his brothers one by one, and verse 24 told us that he proposed to anoint Mahēndra as Yuvarāja when the latter was 20 years old, but Mahēndra preferred the religious life.

10, and compare 6) that, while the *Dipavaṃsa* dates the "accession" of Aśōka (really, the seizure of the sovereignty by him) at 214 years, and his "consecration" or "coronation" (literally, 'besprinkling'; more conveniently, 'anointment')¹ at 218 years, the *Mahāvamsa* places the two events at respectively 218 and 222 years; and that thus "the regal consecration constitutes a point of difference between the two chronicles". But the *Mahāvamsa* cannot be properly interpreted in that manner: like the *Dipavaṃsa* and *Buddhaghōsha*, it distinctly tells us that Aśōka was anointed 218 years after the death of Buddha, when he had passed four years without anointment.

It is certainly the case (see Norman, loc. cit., 6) that the details of reigns given by the existing texts of *Buddhaghōsha* and the *Mahāvamsa* yield 224 instead of 214 years as the interval from the death of Buddha to the seizure of the sovereignty by Aśōka, and consequently might be held to imply 228 instead of 218 years as the interval to the anointment. But, against that, we have their explicit statements that the total of the interval to the anointment was 218 years. And it is easy to see where the mistakes lie. The text of *Buddhaghōsha* assigns 18 instead of 8 years to Anuruddha and Muṇḍa: and the text of the *Mahāvamsa* assigns 34 instead of 24 years to Chandragupta. We cannot doubt that these two features are to be attributed to mistakes by early copyists; or to misguided corrections by some would-be improvers.

¹ Kings have been 'anointed' (not 'consecrated' or 'inaugurated') from time immemorial to the present day. And the term applies to the Hindū process, as much as to any other, in view of the fact that the ingredients of the liquid which was poured over the king, from a jar or a conch-shell as the case might be, included ghee (*sarpis*, *ghṛita*, *ājya*): see, e.g., *Bṛhat-Samhitā*, 48/47. 50, below his translation of which Kern has remarked, apropos of the use of *snāna*, 'bathing, washing', in the title of the chapter, *pushyasnāna* :—"In so much does the ceremony more resemble an anointment than a washing."

**B (see p. 26 above).—The anointment of Aśoka on
Jyaishṭha śukla 5, 25 April, B.C. 264.**

In connection with my determination, through the *nakshatra* or constellation Tishya, i.e. Pushya, of Jyaishṭha śukla 5, = 25 April, B.C. 264, as being in all probability the exact day on which Aśoka was anointed, the following remarks may be made.

The fifth pillar-edict directed that, on the full-moon day when the moon would be in Tishya (the full-moon of Pausha), fish were not to be either killed or sold, animals found in elephant-preserves and in the fishermen's reserves were not to be killed, bulls and certain other animals were not to be castrated, and horses and oxen were not to be branded.¹ The first separate edict at Dhauli and Jaugada directed that that proclamation should be read under each Tishya *nakshatra*, and on any suitable occasions during the intervals.² And the second separate edict at the same places ordered the reading of that proclamation on each occurrence of Tishya during the *chāturmāsya*-period, and, at pleasure, on any suitable occasions meanwhile.³

In view of the point, established by astrological and other works, that the conjunction of the moon with Pushya (Tishya) was a specially auspicious one for the anointment of kings, we can hardly fail to recognize something very marked in these allusions to that constellation, otherwise not easily to be understood, in the edicts of Aśoka. The anointment of Aśoka is fixed to an early day in the bright fortnight of Jyaishṭha by the statements about the first anointment of Dēvānāmpīya-Tissa (see p. 11 above). And the day on which the moon was in Pushya in that month in B.C. 264 was 25 April, = śukla 5 : on that day

¹ Text (Delhi-Siwalik version) in *Ind. Ant.*, vol. 18, p. 74 ; *Epi. Ind.*, vol. 2, p. 257.

² Texts in *Archæol. Surv. Southern India*, vol. 1, p. 127 ; *Ind. Ant.*, vol. 19, p. 84.

³ Texts, loc. cit. in each case, pp. 129, 98.

she was in that constellation during all the daylight hours, from at any rate 8.0 a.m.

The day being not too near the new-moon conjunction, the position of the moon for it could be easily foretold by the astrologers from eye-observation on the preceding evening, if not even sooner, without their having to make exact calculations, which in those early times perhaps they could not do. And we may compare what is given to us in connection with the intended anointment of Rāma, as recited in the Rāmāyaṇa. King Daśaratha said to him :¹ —“ The weighers of destinies (*daivachintakāḥ*) announce that the moon to-day entered Punarvasu, before Pushya, and that the conjunction with Pushya is certain for to-morrow : my mind urges me, as it were, to anoint thee then, under Pushya : to-morrow, O afflicter of foes !, I will anoint thee as Yuvarāja.” It may be understood, in both cases, that, it being known that the time for the moon to enter Pushya was near at hand, the preparations for an anointment were so far made that all the arrangements could be completed at a very short notice, directly the astrologers were able to indicate the day with certainty.

**C (see p. 11 above).—The second anointment of
Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa.**

Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa of Ceylon was anointed to the sovereignty 236 years after the death of Buddha ; that is, at some time in the 237th year current (B.C. 247–46). And he was twice anointed : for the first time, on Mārgaśīra śukla 1, the first day of the bright fortnight of Mārgaśīra, = 6 November, B.C. 247 ; for the second time, on the full-moon day of the following Vaiśākha, = 16 April, B.C. 246.

In the fact that he was twice anointed, there is

¹ Bombay text, 2 (Ayōdhyākāṇḍa), § 4, verses 21, 22 : and compare verse 2, and § 7, verse 11. According to the Bengal recension, the ultimate anointment of Rāma also was under Pushya : Gorresio, 6 (Yuddhakāṇḍa), § 112, verse 70.

something exceptional, but nothing very remarkable. The ancient Sanskrit books give elaborate rules both for the *abhishēka* or ordinary anointment of kings, performed on the recognition of their succession, and for their *punar-abhishēka* or reanointment, usually celebrated at the end of a *rājasūya*-sacrifice.¹ And that suffices to show that a practice of second anointments existed.

But the existence of the practice of reanointment must not be pressed too far and misapplied. Professor Norman, who would apparently place the conversion of Aśoka quite early in his reign,² has suggested (this Journal, 1908. 11) that, on parallel lines with Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa, Aśoka was twice anointed, first as a non-Buddhist and then as a Buddhist, and that his possession of the name Piyadassi, Priyadarśin, should be dated from his second anointment. There is, however, nothing in the inscriptions, or in the possession of the name Priyadarśin, to lead us to think that Aśoka was twice anointed. And Professor Norman is in error as regards his supposed analogy: the Ceylonese books show clearly that Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa was converted to Buddhism by Mahēndra, who only arrived in Ceylon and met Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa a month after the second anointment of the latter, which, therefore, had no connection with his conversion.

On the other hand, the Ceylonese books make it clear why Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa was anointed for the second time: see, for instance, the *Dipavaṃsa*, 11. 14-40; 17. 79-87. After his first anointment, he sent some costly presents to his friend Aśoka. The latter sent in return equally valuable presents, including articles, such as a right-hand conch-shell, —that is, one with its spiral turning to the

¹ See, for instance, *Aitarēya-Brahmaṇa*, book 8, chapters 2-4; *Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa*, book 5, *adhyāyas* 2-4: also *Bṛihat-Saṃhitā*, chapter 48/47. On the whole topic see the article *abhishēka* in Goldstücker's *Sanskrit Dictionary*.

² Against the distinct evidence of the inscriptions: see this Journal, 1908. 496.

right instead of the left (such shells are extremely rare, and are highly prized),— which constituted the paraphernalia for an anointment.¹ And the receipt of those articles suggested to Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa the appropriateness of a reanointment.

According to the Dipavaṃsa, 11. 34–6, the presents were accompanied by a message from Aśoka, extolling Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha, and describing himself as reverencing them. This is not mentioned in the account in chapter 17. But a third account states it again, and adds a postscript (12. 6), which the Mahāvaṃsa repeats (p. 70), recommending that Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa should do the same.² It is probably this which has misled Professor Norman. The sequel in both works makes it clear, as also does Buddhaghōsha's account, that Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa did not act on any such advice at that stage.

Another great king of Ceylon who was twice anointed was Parakkamabāhu I, A.D. 1153–86. He was first anointed, and was crowned (see the Sulavaṃsa, 71. 4, 19–28), when, in accordance with the recorded wish of his predecessor Gajabāhu II, he was made king by the chief ministers, on the eve of the commencement of the war with the pretender Māṇābharaṇa. He was anointed for the second time in (? at the end of) the second year after that (72. 362), when the contest had come to a close and his dominion was fully established.

¹ For the use of the conch-shell in anointments, see, e.g., the Mahābhārata, 12 (Śāntiparvan), Calcutta text, § 40, verse 1457:— “Then Dāśārha (Krishṇa) rose, and, taking a filled conch, anointed (*abhyashiñchat*) the lord of the earth, Yudhisṭhira, son of Kuntī.” I follow the Kumbhakōṇam text, § 39, verse 15, in taking *pūritam*, ‘filled’, instead of *pūjītam*, ‘worshipped’.

² Buddhaghōsha also quotes this postscript in his Samantapāsādikā (Vinayapiṭaka, ed. Oldenberg, 3. 323): he represents Dēvānaṃpiya-Tissa as remembering the admonition of Aśoka after his meeting with Mahendra. The expression *ekamābhisittō*, which we have just after that, cannot be properly amended into *ekamās-ābhisittō*, at any rate in the sense of “one-month-anointed”, since the second anointment was five and a half months after the first: it seems to stand for something meaning “(was) at once anointed”.



3 2400 00589 9632

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

OF

GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND.

22, Albemarle Street, Piccadilly, W.

Special Notice.

THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY publishes Quarterly an *Illustrated Journal*, containing Original Articles on the Languages, the Archæology, the History, the Beliefs, or the Customs of the East.

A Special Article in the Journal gives each Quarter an account, as complete as possible up to date, of all scholarly work being done throughout the world in these branches of inquiry.

The Annual Subscription to the Society is THREE GUINEAS a Year for Resident, and THIRTY SHILLINGS a Year for Non-Resident, Members.

Compositions.

Members may compound for their subscriptions at the following rates:—

Resident Members for life	...	...	...	...	45 guineas
Non-resident or Library Members for life	...	...	...	...	£22 10 0

Each Member who has paid his Subscription for the current year receives the Journal post free, has the use of the Library at the Society's rooms, and admission to the meetings of the Society. Three-guinea subscribers may also borrow books.

Libraries and Non-Members may obtain the Journal post-free by a Subscription of **Thirty Shillings** a year if paid in advance direct to the Secretary. The Price of each Part separately is **Twelve Shillings**.